

## **NEWS ARTICLE**

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## **C**HOCOLATE Myths & Tips

Ahhh...chocolate. The ultimate comfort food. Feel guilty just thinking about it? Well, don't. Chocolate, as it turns out, isn't a food to feel guilty about, if eaten in moderation.

Many of the myths about chocolate and its unhealthy attributes are just that...myths. Here's the sweet truth:

\_ *Myth #1* - Chocolate is as harmful as butter.

Truth - Chocolate does contain the same amount of saturated fat as butter, but butter raises cholesterol 4 times more than cocoa butter, the fat in chocolate. Cocoa butter contains stearic acid, which has a neutral effect on cholesterol. It does contain palmitic acid, which has been shown to raise cholesterol. Caution is needed for patients with atherosclerosis because new and preliminary evidence suggests that stearic acid may increase blood clots. Cocoa powder is a better choice than chocolate because it is much lower in fat.

\_ *Myth #2* - Chocolate is high in caffeine.

Truth - The amount of caffeine in a 1.3 ounce chocolate bar is about the same as the caffeine in a cup of decaffeinated coffee, less than 10mg. (A six-ounce cup of coffee contains over 100 mg of caffeine.)

\_ *Myth #3* - Chocolate causes hyperactivity.

Truth - Research has shown for years that sugar does not cause hyperactivity, and this includes chocolate. Experts believe that it is the excitement surrounding events where sugary foods are consumed that causes children to get wound up.

\_ *Myth #4* - Chocolate causes migraine headaches.

Truth - Though many people report headaches after eating chocolate, research conducted at the University of Pittsburgh suggests that there may be no association between chocolate consumption and the onset of migraine, tension, or other headaches after all. However, the diet-headache connection is by no means fully understood, and certain individuals may indeed have a sensitivity to chocolate.

\_ *Myth #5* - There is nothing healthy about chocolate.

Truth - A study published in the Lancet reported that chocolate contains relatively high amounts of phenolic compounds, which possess antioxidant properties. A 1.5-ounce

chocolate bar contains about the same amount of phenolic compounds as a 5-ounce serving of red wine.

*The Bottom Line:*

An occasional chocolate treat is okay as long as you fit it into a high-fiber, low-fat eating and exercise plan. Here are some tips if you like chocolate but want to watch calories:

- \_ Use light chocolate syrup (sweetened with Aspartame) to jazz up a fruit dessert, flavor coffee, make chocolate milk or hot chocolate.
- \_ Chocolate chips are 20% lower in calories than chocolate candy bars. Sprinkle a few over nonfat light yogurt and fresh fruit.
- \_ Stir cocoa into hot oatmeal to make a healthy afternoon snack that beats a chocolate craving.

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